COMMUNICATION

CRITICAL CONVERSATION

30 DAYS TO MASTER SMALL TALK WITH ANYONE

BUILD UNBREAKABLE CONFIDENCE. ELIMINATE YOUR FEARS AND BECOME A SOCIAL POWERHOUSE

JACK STEEL

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BUILD UNBREAKABLE CONFIDENCE, ELIMINATE YOUR FEARS AND BECOME A SOCIAL POWERHOUSE

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DAY 1

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS?

Ask yourself a few questions about how you really feel;

- Have you for once started a conversation?
- Have you ever being worried about how to break the ice in certain situations?
- Have you tried engaging in a conversation only to find out that you're still not fit or missing the point?

These problems are more familiar than you imagine, this is just the way people place public speaking on their list when talking about their greatest fears, getting to meet new people is also prominent. It is an important part of man experience that is rarely as it looks. You probably met the person at work or in school, the smooth talker who goes around to communicate with anyone at any time. He glides around from subject to subject, and he is able to engage the interest of one or more people. You check out how easy this is, and you begin to wonder why it is not the same for you. You discover there are two major enemies stopping you from springing up a chat with people; the awkward laugh and silence. You always feel people won't find you interesting because you think the awkward laugh and silence at strategic times is to fill the void that is in the conversation, you feel as though you can fill the void, but you aren't sure on how to go about it. That moment when you notice a shift in the person's attention, probably to look at their watch or snap out to think for an excuse to disengage from the conversation, you always know that there is something you can do to fill up the loophole or any to salvage the conversation, but you still have doubts on what it may be.

Some people try to justify themselves by concluding it was just a 'small talk' and so no need to prolong it. You have to understand that each little subject you are able to bring up can result in a greater conversation and meaningful dialogue that can extend to more successful relationships; either on personal basis or business.

This book has been designed for anyone who desire and is ready to improve his/her communication with others. Whether personal or business basis, the relationships you keep are essential, and it all starts with conversations. The art of engaging in conversation and talk is built on a foundation of getting familiar with small talk because a conversation without facts and figures is not worth having. Engaging in successful conversation means being able to build a stronghold with the other party, and the main key to this is effective small talk. Our goal is to help you make use of the tools to 'make this happen for yourself'. In the latter part of this book, you'll get to confront and conquer barriers that are holding you back from success in business and your personal life, you'll be able to get over natural shyness, you'll have the chance to improve the flow of your conversations, and also make use of many other techniques to be perfect conversationalist by talking small.

Signing up for this guide will be the greatest step you'll take, you are here because you want to be a more effective and engaging communicator. You have a very special being inside you, and you're ready to unveil this being to the world. In the following lessons of this book, you'll learn how to

guide this being out and present in the best possible light. It all starts with taking the primary step in a conversation and opening with an interesting small talk. Some people conclude that you'll need talent to become a good conversationalist, well I would say this is so untrue. Tomorrow you'll know more about why this is untrue and also have an idea on how to get started on the path to become a small talk professional. Stay with us!

DAY 2

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

Let's start the day by asking ourselves what small talk really is? You may have an idea based on the daily use of the term, but for you to understand the concept better, we are going to dig deep into the term. Small talk is actually not well defined the way you think, although it might mean different things to different people. You might even decide to check up on online dictionaries to get the definition of small talk, but most times those definitions are more of help to discover misconceptions of the term than the exact definition.

The official urban dictionary defined small talk as 'useless and unnecessary conversation proposed to fill the silence in an awkward situation. Commonly results in feelings of loneliness and social discomfort, usually initiated by comments regarding the current weather, weather pattern of the past/future few days or major weather disturbances in the recent past'.

Have you wondered what makes this incorrect? First of all, let's review urban dictionary's official definition of big talk; 'Grandiose ideas or vacuous threats not acted upon'. The definition of both terms are very incorrect and also very limiting. There is a perception that small talk is 'meaningless' and 'useless' when the truth is that it is often an important component of human interaction.

You'll get a clear understanding after reading my story; some years back, I met a celebrity in an unexpected location two different times, both times he was someone I admired and definitely wanted his autograph. I met him in a coffee shop the first time, I decided to skip the small talk and move on to asking for his autograph, I saw it as the most polite and effective way to ask, I thought engaging in small talk would be a waste of time since he could not spare from his busy schedule.Besides, I thought asking for his autograph straightaway would be flattering. To my greatest surprise, he turned me down with a bit of profanity to emphasize his point. When I bashed on him the second time, it was in an elevator; I knew that I needed the autograph, but the previous experience I had with him taught me not to ask about it. Instead, I just started by asking if he had seen the basketball game from the previous night. We both shared allegiance to the same club; it didn't take much time before we found common ground. To my greatest surprise, this time, he offered to give me his autograph without asking. The small talk I started, in this case, was productive and useful, and that ignoring the small talk at first was not only rude but also ineffective.

So let's go through the definition;

We can simply define small talk as a vital social interaction where a lower priority of subject matter is discussed in a more appropriate fashion to build rapport, discover the same interest on common ground, and establish affinity. You can as well define it again as an informal discourse or dialog that does not entail any form of business transaction or issue that must eventually be addressed.

Take your time to consider these two definitions and turn it around in your mind a little. It is important that you take the time to define what small talk means to you. While many would ignore the small talk and get down to the main business of the day in every conversation they engage in, can you imagine

yourself living in this world? Even the business world is built by small talks, and nothing will change that. Direct speech has not been able to duplicate the results you'll get from taking the time to master the art of small talk.

DAY 3

THE MYTH OF SMALL TALK TALENT.

You probably have doubts that you may struggle in the course of reading this book, now that you're just getting started. Maybe this is so because you've not experienced any success in the past, or you feel like you don't have the gift of gab. You come across other people who have so much charisma and communicate easily with others, and you can't still imagine it being so easy for you. You are not just sure if you really have what it takes. I used to know two kids who were in love with their guitar and wanted to win a local competition that was held annually in their hometown. One was naturally gifted; able to play any song on his guitar on hearing it. The other kid struggled to learn arrangements and chords; only able to play the songs that he knew very well. However, in the months leading up to the competition, the first talented kid jammed with his friends while the other sought out instructors, concentrated on his practices and played songs that were beyond his ability every day. I believe you want to guess who won the contest.

Small talks and playing the guitar might look so simple to you; the point is; talent isn't everything. A lot of people have fallen for the myth of talent, and the field of interpersonal communication doesn't sound different. It's possible for you not to have the talent for conversation, but the good news is that you do not need any talent, the art of small talk is open to everyone to master. So what is the criteria that you need to be successful in this course? All you need to do is to approach this course with an open mind. Everyone reading this now should know they can learn these skills with the proper training and enough persistence. You've taken the first and most powerful step already; registering for this course, just like that guitar kid who signed up for lessons. If you're able to study and emulate his practice and work ethic to mastering small talk the way he mastered his guitar for the contest, then nothing should hinder you from being a small talk master at the end of these 30 days. It's not only about the training, you also have to be ready to push your limits, just as that kid did with tunes that were far beyond his skill level. You can only achieve your goals when you challenge yourself.

The most effective speakers from time didn't get there by relying on charisma or talent alone, even so, many still believe that natural charisma can only take you far. Your charisma is just like a bonus, successful execution of the principles that would be discussed can take you so much farther. Some of these principles are ancient techniques that were used by philosophers since classical antiquity while others have been unleashed by improvements in modern technology, physiology and behavioural sciences. Forget about been knowledgeable to succeed in this field, you just need to do the work, practice and get the job done to the best of your ability.

You can just tell anyone that approaches you after this course that your free flow with others is successful because you have a natural talent for it.

DAY 4

IT STARTS WITH YOU!

It's all about you; you came into this course with your self- imposed talent, life experience and perspective. How you proceed in this study will rely on that, even though this book aims at giving you the skills to succeed in becoming a small talk professional, it still can't change who you are. Your personal strength will have a great role to play in the upcoming lessons; it's important that you get familiar with these strengths. This requires a high degree of self- reflection as you move ahead. Take these moments to hypothetically look at yourself in the mirror, checking out the strengths you possess and the weaknesses that need to be worked on.

Some years back, I needed to give a speech in front of a large audience; I felt physically sick because I never knew I had stage fright up till that awkward moment. Although I had spoken in smaller gatherings and classrooms before, so I could not comprehend what the problem was, it was an issue of perception that I was suffering from. For some reason, I saw the larger audience to be more intimidating. It took time before I realized that the number of people does not change anything still, maybe I would have given a much better speech.

Same principle with small talk mastery; the more you know yourself, the easier to familiarize with other people you meet with, the better you will know how to talk to them. One important factor to consider is what your goals are, although it looks obvious based on the definition of the book, but it is so different for everyone. The goals of a person who works with the sales department may be different for the goals of a manager when it comes to what they wish to accomplish by mastering small conversation. This will appear true for those that have chosen this book based on personal reasons reflecting than professional reasons. Taking your time to carefully identify your goal will be instrumental in understanding the basic aspect of this course.

Ask yourself these few questions; what exactly is my purpose for getting this book? What has been my experience with little conversations in the past? What does the future look like with small talk? The answers to these questions will guide you in clarifying your goals. Do not make the mistake of giving them definitive answers for now, but rather go back to them on a daily basis as you go on. You'll find out that your answers will change as you see things from another perspective and when you discover new possibilities with the lessons taught. The lessons won't perform the magic themselves, because reading alone won't give you the chance to accomplish your mastery of small talk; why? Because you tend to talk less when, you read. Don't forget you have to turn these practices into action at every possible opportunity. Utilizing professional small talk techniques by talking to people will make you become more proficient.

DAY 5

CLARIFY THE DIFFERENCE; SMALL TALK AND ORDINARY 'BLA- BLA'

At certain point in your life, you probably might have been on the wrong side; talking to the infamous blabbermouth. You understand what that really means; someone who seems to talk just to himself/herself talk, and after some time, you get bored of listening and just tune them out. In the end, all you hear is 'Bla' where you should really be hearing words. Today is about learning not to be that person. It's important for you to understand the difference between a successful small talk and the kind of droning blabber that tend to give small talk a bad name. The exact opposite of blabbering away is small talk. Small talk is anything but meaningless, and in fact, should be submerged with meaning in every phase. You may feel as though nothing is meaningful at first, but you'll find out with time that its purpose is twofold.

The first purpose of any small talk conversation is to show your partner the reason why the conversation is being held in the first place. Your conversation partner will know you better when he/ she has an idea of what you're trying to express. In this way, the first purpose is all about presenting a gift and should not be handled lightly. You might miss the opportunity if you pretend like you're giving your partner the right information, or giving him/ her what you think they want to hear.

The second reason for engaging in small talk conversation is to get familiar with your partner. This entails giving them the opportunity to speak without interrupting them or sharing your own interests. Your listening skills have to be effective for you to maximize your opportunities for understanding your partner.

If what you are saying does not go in line with any of these two conditions, there is a chance that you are engaging in a meaningless talk. I had a good friend who fell into this category when I was studying interpersonal communication. He was the kind of man who loved to associate with people; he could tell that from his smiles when talking. However, his conversations were not straight forward, off topic, and would either result to nowhere or abruptly change in the middle of conversation. It was almost impossible to get a word in edgewise, and if you were able to, he would rather interject and take the conversation back to the direction he had been aiming at or a completely different direction. He always had unanswered questions; he was a perfect blabbermouth to crown it all. My friend discovered he was having issues with his conversations after some years; he had a different case entirely; not for too much talk and not enough listening, but rather a feeling to fill every second of a conversation with words. You have the opportunity to practice the rhythm within small talk later, it should be inhibited with pauses, beats, and an occasional appropriate smile. It does not have to focus on the most important point of view, but it shouldn't be without merit.

Just like my buddy, you can work on the results of your conversation by learning to talk smaller. Small talks give you the privilege to highlight and explore topics that have mutual personal meaning to yourself and your partner. Used perfectly, it is the same as building a bridge in a gap between your

separate life experiences. Don’t forget that everything that is not giving the conversation progress be discarded and left unsaid. If your next contribution won’t make your target learn something about you, or won’t give them the chance to reveal a special thing about themselves, then it doesn’t have value.

Always try to take note and ignore blather. If you discover you’ve run out of what to say, then try to chip in an open- ended question to give your conversation partner the chance to pick up the ball and run with it.

DAY 6

WHY DO PEOPLE PREFER SMALL TALKERS? AND WHY ARE THEY MORE SUCCESSFUL?

You may have noticed some other gifted conversationalists that have gone ahead, while you still remain in the same job year after year. You might have had the mind of starting a relationship with an intelligent person only to have somebody with more of a gift for gab get to them first. All you are after is to make more friends in your personal life, but nothing keeps coming through. The questions keep coming;

- Why are small talkers more likable and more successful?

There are no doubts about being likable because it's obvious that it makes success much easier. Those who are privileged to attain and maintain successful relationships often discover that many other components of success fall into place with ease when the right things are done. There are three main reasons behind the success of small talkers; why they are easier to like, and why their success is on a high note;

1. They take the time to really get to know other people.
2. They make what others have to say to them clear.
3. They do not allow others feel the impression that their relationships are purely utilitarian.

The first reason is the most important of all, people seem to be complicated, and they always try to cover the part where they have a life outside of work. A lot of people are more likely to give the benefit of the doubt to somebody who displays an active interest in that life, no matter how hard it may be. The second acts on this, as much as you wish to hear interesting things from people, you also want to be heard yourself. If people affirm what you think and what you have to say is important, you are more likely to make a duplicate of the affirmation when the time comes for them to tell you more about themselves. The third reason marks the most important, because this is the main problem that arises from avoiding small talk generally. Ask yourself this question; can I jump to questions about sex and marriage on a first date with my partner? That means your date will have to go through a rain check before dinner even comes. Even though sex or marriage may be the ultimate reason behind the date in the first place, it will be rude and inappropriate to disclose to your partner or show them that they don't really matter to you; what matters is what you want to get from them.

All personal relationship has its basis on the same principle, no one wants to feel used or cheated, and you run through the risk every time you ignore the small talk and try to talk straight to business. You shouldn't be bothered or surprised when the other party snaps out of the conversation. The truth is; those who are able to start with small talk affirm their mate as a person and engage interest by

disclosing interest outside of personal business goals.

You're in here to present yourself better in your personal and business life; it's up to you to learn the techniques to make this come true.

DAY 7

BE PREPARED.

We are at it again! Are you ready to learn some trade secrets that will crown your efforts to becoming a small talk professional? Today is all about secrets. The primary and most important step is preparation; setting things right. An old adage in Latin says; 'parantes paratior' to prepare is to be prepared. There is a great deal of truth attached to this saying, the things you've put into getting ready will actually decide how ready you truly are. You may have the thoughts; how ready do I have to be? Is small talk not supposed to be spontaneous? No! You may be wrong with that. Professional small talk may seem to be spontaneous but in real life, be well-prepared and practise in advance.

There are three important steps that need to be put into consideration when preparing for a conversation; before you even think of starting a small talk, you should consider a number of 'emergency small talk' topics arranged and ready to go. You could write them down as target points on your to-do list and refer them throughout the day. Just looking at the list, you can easily impose these point upon yourself. The most efficient topics may include news events of the day or upcoming events that could be intriguing. These are perfect options to fall back on when your conversation partner seems to be on the wrong side or is losing interest in a line of discussion.

Get familiar with your conversation partner.

Before you start a conversation, it's important that you gather all possible information that you have at hand. Anything that you engage in now might give you a cue to spring up a conversation that will hold their interest do not depend on old chestnuts of discussion. The internet and social networking have helped and shown us the way to aggregate current events to make us stay in line with the rest of our community. In specific cases, we may be privileged to step ahead a bit. Having a revelation hidden within you, so to speak, maybe the distinction between starting an engaging conversation and listening to your partner clear their throat while thinking of some way to get themselves out from the conversation. I made use of this same approach to speak with a colleague of mine I had not had the chance to meet before.

My ultimate goal in the conversation was to gain a referral, but I wasn't familiar with him enough to ask him to stick his neck out of me. One thing I remembered vividly about him was that he attended a university that was a sports rival of my own, and while many would suggest that bringing up a point of animosity would not be a fair place to spring up a conversation, but the thing is; it can surprisingly be effective. Reminding ourselves about great moments in one another's alma maters built a report very fast. I didn't bore him on the topic, however, as there was a big event influencing the growth of our industry that I had read about on the internet earlier that morning. I was able to discover that he was also concerned about the news and it brought about one of the topics on my to-do list. At the end of our talk, I didn't just get a referral; I was able to get a potential friend in the business.

Getting ready for a conversation is just the peripheral and start of the secrets behind the small talk professional. Now let's go and explore and help you turn your preparation into performance.

DAY 8

GET OVER SHYNESS.

Over the years, students have cited shyness as one of their biggest fear and the main reason why they need they require help to get through with it. Getting over natural shyness is the main reason why a lot of people believe they cannot become effective as they wish to be. There is no need why your natural inclination to be shy needs to be a deliberating factor or condition that will keep you from being successful in your life. Today, we will deal with methods that'll set you on the right path of success; I spite of your shyness.

One major thing to keep in mind is that everyone is shy, irrespective of who you may be, either introverted or extroverted, that experience of talking to an unfamiliar individual tends to provoke a predictable natural response in all people. Of course, meeting new people can be very stressful and may cause anxiety, nobody really values or treasure such feeling. What makes the difference is how we are able to deal with that emotion that meeting new people provokes. Let's take you through some strategies you can adopt to fight this anxiety.

First, understand that the other party is feeling just the same way as you; once you're able to set this straight, you may instantly start to feel some kind of kinship to them. Taking the time to divert attention from your own feelings is an excellent way to sit upright on other aspects of your conversation.

We were to discuss the importance of preparation in the previous chapter, so it's time for you to review your preparation, this is the point where it starts to pay off. Being prepared will only not help to make you feel at ease, but also give you some time to review what you plan to talk about. You'll be surprised at how this would help you greatly. Also, work on your breath, you have to be able to control your breath, as this is very essential when talking, and allowing your breath to get away from your partner is one of the most common errors that amateurs make during a conversation. Your heart might start racing when you're unable to control your breath, and this will super-enhance the natural anxiety that you already feel. The anxiety in turn worsens the condition and brings about panic attack in some cases. The secret behind this is to focus on your breath instead of what you are feeling. All you need to do is to breath in and out slowly, remembering to take breaths as you move along.

You can make use of any of these strategies to improve your small talk skills, but endeavouring to make use of the three will yield the perfect result you wish for. The more you get familiar with using effective small talks to start up a conversation, the more you'll realize that you really do not have to rely on them as mush. This is a great part of the natural procedure that slows your anxiety, by working on yourself closely to react differently to stimuli. This is the same as the feeling you might have felt when you rode a bike for the first time, or when you were still learning how to swim. Your proficiency will definitely remove the feeling of anxiety, much as you trusted yourself not to fall off the bike or sink under the water.

Why not as yourself this simple question; 'what do I have to lose?' although it is so true that you have a lot or something important to accomplish in your conversation with the other party involved, you

also have to take note that it's not something you've accomplished yet. You have nothing to lose and a lot to accomplish when you start the conversation. The only way in which you'll lose is if you're on the receiving, and with this I mean you're unable to start the conversation when you know you have things to say. This will be a very tough task for you because it looks like you're ready to engage in a fight with your own nature, but you have to keep in mind that it is a fight worth winning. Envision small goals and enjoy the small wins as much as the big victories. Today, try to start a small conversation from different perspectives and you'll discover that it is ever easier to move forward to the important ones.

DAY 9

BREAKING THE ICE

We all have experienced this at one point or the other. That awkward silence is a hallmark of conversations even among those that know more about it, and fresh conversations with people that are not familiar with each other well are especially prone to them. 'Breaking the Ice' is one common way to describe how to deal with these unforeseen freezes in the conversation. Starting with an introduction can be the ultimate icebreaker. It is the perfect way to start a professional small talk session. It does not matter if the person doing the introduction is close to the person you want to talk to, what's more important is your introduction being enthusiastic, it presents the tone for the first impression that you are willing to give. You really don't have to introduce yourself or make the introduction at the beginning of a conversation, once you have someone at your disposal who can do it, then you'll ahead of your game in any kind of conversation.

Whether you're introducing yourself or you're being introduced, you have to understand that any appropriate introduction comes in twofold. Any introduction is always in twofold, think of it as answering these questions; ''who am I and why should I care?" you have to make every greeting informative, and every piece of information given must be useful to begin your small talk. You have to take note of your body language when introducing yourself, try not to stay too close or too far away, and also try to maintain a good posture. These two important keys will do more for breaking the ice than anything that you want to say.

Once you get in to position, it's best that you begin with something humorous and ironic. It really does not have to be a joke, you might just begin with a funny comment; such as ''nice day, isn't it?" you can enjoy fruitful conversations when you begin with such rhetorical questions that require no thought or considered answer. With this, you'll give your partner a piece of information he/she will have to unfold. Trust your sense of humour.

You might not need to make more than two to three ice- breaking questions or comments in any conversation you want to engage in. if after the three questions, you still discover the ice is there, then you may be facing a serious problem with the conversation; the best thing is to bail out of it. Although we will still come across recovery plans and strategy in later, but focus on having a small ''bag of tricks and magic" of ice-breaking quips. You may need to narrow them to your partner. You have to ensure this because levity and humour may not always be suitable.

DAY 10

LET IT FLOW

Today, I am going to take you through more technical territory. So let's start with a story to set the right mood.

One of the biggest problems I encountered when I started studying interpersonal communication was my ability to talk. Even though I would still say talking was not much of a problem for me, it was just easy for me to learn, listen and be quiet. That is another one for another chapter. The problem I did face was how to manage the flow of a conversation. It always seemed like two things happened in every conversation that I try to engage myself in; the first thing was that the conversation would go so far off the topic, like a ship heading towards destruction after missing its track. One happened with a friend, the conversation was about business at first, before we moved down to philosophy, and finally found ourselves talking about childhood embarrassments. I never got the chance to ask him if he was interested in investing in my business because the last thing we discussed was about humiliation, so I found it difficult to fit it in again.

Coming through with the flow of conversation can be very tough; preferably be called a challenge. As discussed in the last chapter, starting a conversation alone can be tough enough. However, you have to practice how to navigate a conversation in such a way that it would eventually make up with the first idea you started with, this way, you would know your conversation is going somewhere; not like mine that started on a good path and ended with what was not planned in the first place. You might need a partner for this exercise because the rest of the days and lecture is a bit technical.

Get a pen and write down three different topics, now you and your partner should now draw three topics out of a hat. Familiarize yourself with the topic, but your partner does not have to know about this. Set a timer for three to five minutes, you both have those five minutes or so to introduce yourself in the manner outlined in the previous chapter and also discuss all the six topics in those five minutes.

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Were you able to get through with it? If yes, were you able to deal with the six topics within the time frame? Or was it rushed? You probably encountered the problem getting a word on edgewise for anxiety, you experienced the fear of interrupting your partner. This indicates how important it is to get familiar with the art of a flowing conversation.

A flowing conversion will not just go from one topic to another, you have to relate your next topic to go in line with the previous one you covered. Also. You have to take note of the topics that your partner will bring up. The three important ways to get these done are as follows;

- Don't give room for pauses to interrupt or cut the conversation flow, respond to what your partner says even if it means you have to answer your own question.
- Focus on the topics that will enhance the discussion instead of changing the subject.
- Follow up with questions to topics your partner brings up to show that have an interest in

what they had to say.

Managing conversation flow can be disturbing. But it would be simpler if you look at it like a dance. In any type of dance, somebody must lead while the other partner will follow. A perfect conversation, unlike a dance or movie, will come up naturally between the two parties. Just like learning various dancing steps, try to learn basic steps and be confident anywhere you find yourself.

DAY 11

DON'T MISS THE EXIT.

We have learnt from the previous chapters how to start a conversation as well as how to manage the flow of your professional small talk. Today, you'll learn how to perfectly bow out of a conversation at the right time. When it comes to a successful small talk, how you close it is just as essential as how you start it out.

Have you ever found yourself in the middle of those conversations? You definitely know the types I'm talking about. The other party you're talking to finds it difficult to get the hint that the conversation is over, and you find yourself in the middle thinking for an excuse to disengage from any further discussion. Your aim is not to be that person. There are three main reasons why you have to end a successful small talk when you're ahead;

- When you have exhausted your list of topics: if this is the case, then you've just has a very successful talk. This may not come very often, but when it does, just thank your partner for the time and depart.
- When you have achieved a positive result: if your conversation finally results in to what you have proposed form the beginning, then there is no reason why you should forge ahead. Take the little time to engage your partner and ask if there is anything you can do, and if they feel satisfied, then its best to just part ways.
- If the conversation has gone poorly: most times, conversations might turn out the unexpected way, so the best policy to play is to be quiet if you're ahead in such conversation before it gets worse. Bad conversations come up to the best of us, most times as the implication of poorly considered words or bad calculation between conversation partners. Lingering animosity is not what you're aiming for, so it's better in some cases to opt in for the better part of the verbal valour.

Once you get to know that one of the three conditions or reasons have been met, then the question comes in; what do you do? You have to understand that being professional in getting yourself out from a conversation is a combination of grace and most times wit. One example will be cited for each situation;

1. I once had a fruitful conversation with a client, I was done with inviting her over for my seminar, and I quickly filed in the gap for the pause after we ran out of topics with my business card. So, your complementary card or business card can play a similar role in giving yourself out from a successful conversation.
2. What I was going to propose in a conversation was freely offered in the middle of it. It was about the management situation at a company I did contract work for. I wanted to confirm if my contract work could be converted in to a permanent one. The other party impacted the information when we were discussing about corporate culture and how it impacted the morale of the employees. This gave me the privilege to summon the

discussion and wrap it up with a few final thoughts before proceeding to another appointment.

3. This looks like the most difficult of it all; this is where nothing goes right. My partner mentioned something offensive during the course of our conversation and I flinched, although he was expecting a smile or a big grin. He got offended since I turned him down. I forgot my points instantly and I couldn't find my way toward progressing the conversation toward anything near successful.

All conversations must end, but you have to make sure your conversation ends on your own terms. It may look stressful than starting a conversation, but if you stay in the loop, and able to concentrate on any of the three, you will never miss your cue. This happens to be the most underappreciated out of our small talk secrets, but everything will get better as you learn more techniques to highlight its importance.

DAY 12

EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT THE WEATHER; WHY?

‘’nice weather out here, huh?’’

A lot of people have great believe in this short phrase, many believe that coming down to this topic is a sign that the conversation is floundering. However, the real fact is that there is a specified reason why discussions about the weather are a common instrument in the small talk toolbox. The weather on its own is a universal and versatile subject. You could use it to spring up a conversation with a stranger during a ride or a friend you have known for years with equal results. Talking about the weather is a topic that will definitely result in to another topic, and this can be an effective way to direct others in to declaring information about themselves that you otherwise would not be aware of.

I started a conversation with a colleague on one occasion on how hot and humid the weather has been over the weekend, only for him to scoff and declare that since he was in Florida, weekend’s weather was nothing compared to what he was used to. This in turn marked a significant entrance in to a conversation where he explained and told me about several places in the panhandle where I had never been to. People like talking about themselves and where they are from, and if you are able to show little interest in what they are saying, then you’ll discover that a simple comment about the weather can kick start a productive conversation. Although, the weather is not the only topic that works out like this, often times, easy topics are open- ended enough to help a conversation awake, and most times these topics have just one thing in common; you really do not have to think about them very much. These conversation prompts can be a stepping stone to a much more interesting conversation.

Check a few out of some of conversation starters;

- ‘’I saw the latest move just this weekend, so let me tell you... save your cash”.
- ‘’ how about the sports club?”
- ‘’What did you engage in the last weekend?”
- ‘’how’s life treating you?”
- ‘’do you want to take a look at that?” (Show your partner something noticeable in view that you can talk about).
- ‘’ I had the best treat at the best restaurant last night, you really should hear about it”.
- ‘’Will you be present at this upcoming event”?
- ‘’ It really hurts, my cat scratched me this morning, do you have pets at all?”
- ‘’ Hell no man, traffic has been terrible, I think we should all avoid the 405 you know”.
- ‘’I’m local and I’m used to it. You’re from where?”

Naturally, you really do not have to coin these phrases, but rather master them, personalize them to the other party you're speaking to at that time with your own appropriate spin on them. You'll discover that a lot of them are either helpful advice or open ended questions. Don't be confused, this is not a coincidence. Your primary aim in a small talk conversation is to cultivate a conversation where you can develop rapport. You want to avoid topics that may need a high degree of analysis or require a high probability of disagreement. Even if your partner is in love with good argument, they may love it too much. We prefer to talk about weather because it is constant; don't forget this is one of many universal constant topics that you can exploit to understand your conversation partner better. We'll take you through other ''conversation hacks'' as time goes on. For now, enjoy the free flow.

DAY 13

IT IS BETTER TO LISTEN THAN TO TALK.

Today, our focus will be on listening. Over the years, this has been one of the most invaluable things to understand and exploit as a small talk professional. You have to understand that the secret to small talk is big listening, and this is the best way to demonstrate how a professional small talk session proceeds. You already might have heard about active listening and the roles it plays in interpersonal communication. While it's essential to be an active listener, you also should understand there is one distinctive factor showing the difference between small talk and any other conversation.

Considering professional small talk, every word uttered is expected is deliberately intended to give you the chance to listen. Small talk is far from dominating the conversation or steering it where you wish for it to go. It's all about opening up different channels in order to learn more about your partner. No conversation has exceeded the normal 50/50, your goal is still to get close to that ratio as fast as possible. You have to be a contributor in order to make an impression, but how the success or failure of your conversation is defined will depend on how much you take away from the conversation. You really do not need to active- listen your partners till they get tired. ''*Active listening is a strategy not a courtesy''*. You have to consider three main things with your active listening;

- Concentrate on the idea: you don't need to agree or nod to everything that is said, but rather concentrate on important thoughts or ideas that are being brought to limelight. Focus on insight, humour, and other central thoughts that your partner is covering or hiding.
- Ask for clarification: don't be scared to ask for clarification when you're confused or perplexed by your partner's words. You'll tend to reduce frustration and also understand what they are saying when you do this. This can be accomplished when you rephrase whatever your partners are saying, and also when you ask them if they understand the points given correctly.
- Listen to yourself: try to listen to yourself even when you talk. You tend to move on a steady pace when you listen to the words that coming out of your mouth, it actually slows you down and gives you the courage to speak clearly. If you're able to achieve this, your partners will easily get to understand you.

Think of a conversation like you're being paid when you're the one listening and you're paying when you're talking. I guess everyone would rather prefer to be paid than to pay. Although there are times where you have to pay because some things are worth buying. This transactional metaphor will help you visualize the value in listening, but you can only truly understand when you sit down to do it. You'll need a new partner for your adventure this week, it looks similar to the last exercise with the random topics in the hat, but this time you'll need more time to write down the topics that you discussed in those five minutes. If you're able to remember all the five topics that the other party was talking about at the same time you were trying to remember your own, you're on your way to becoming a professional listening.

DAY 14

TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR SPEECH AND VOICE.

Welcome back, today we are going to talk about self –control, and this is going to be one of the most difficult aspect to learn. However, it is important that you understand and master this if you want to be a successful small talk professional. You'll be marvelled at how much is depending on this part of a conversation. The popular saying goes '' it is not what you say that matters, but how you say it". I was having a quite successful conversation with a young woman that got out of control because I did not mind my tone for a few phrases when she asked some specific questions. The conversation got worse at some point and we might not speak to each other again. This more than anything shows how important it is to control your speech and intonation. We discussed listening in the previous chapter, now it's the time to put it in to play. You should pay close attention to three important things in your voice;

- Rhythm
- Tone
- Inflection

People do not really give these three factors the second thought, and these do more to determine how a person reacts to body language.

Verbal rhythm

Having control over your verbal rhythm is dependent on two conditions; being able to have control over the volume of your voice and the pace off it. Think of your voice as one of those shady lines a scientist comes across when measuring decibels, because that's just the way it is. Most people let it rip and leave their rhythm to their instincts. However, when you listen and try to control it, then you'll discover that you are better understood than ever before. When you talk too fast or too loud, there will be distraction from what you want to say.

Tone

Majority of verbal misunderstandings narrow down to one thing: tone. This part is the easiest tool in your speech to let get away from you. You can make an ironic or sarcastic tone without even realizing it. It is better to stick with the policy; when engaging in small talks, make use of warm and friendly tone.

Inflection

Inflection does not get much attention as rhythm or tone, but it is usually the primary thing to go when you are nervous. Try to say the word ''me" now reason how you chose to say that word, all alone, as a sentence in itself can have a completely different meaning. Do not try to over- enunciate every

word, but having your focus on the enunciation of a single word can sometimes guide you to regulate your inflection for the rest of the conversation. This is one thing you cannot master overnight. You can just practice by writing down statements and say them aloud. It may be difficult at first, but when you combine your listening skills from the previous lectures with your own self- control, you can successfully achieve greater control over your verbal interactions.

DAY 15

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION.

As discussed earlier in the previous chapter, one of the most important keys in your communication skill is nonverbal. It's a scientific fact that more than half of what you communicate with your other party is nonverbal. Your body language can influence everything from how knowledgeable they consider you to be to whether or not they believe what you're saying. You may think that this is out of your control, but there are strategies that you can take to enhance your nonverbal communication and have more success in your conversations. Haven't you noticed that you tend to understand a person a lot better when you're in direct contact than you do over the phone? Then you make use of the words ''what do you mean?" or a lot less. This is because a great deal of context is lost when you're having a verbal-only conversation, and a lot more is lost when you engage in a text only conversation. We explained how much depends on your tone of voice in the previous chapters, today will explain how much successful conversation will depend on your nonverbal conversation.

I know you're not a behavioural scientist, neither am I, but I have discovered different methods in which we can make use of to determine how we are viewed by others as we talk with them. Some might be against your natural inclination and thus require significant practice. However, if you train yourself with these techniques in time, you will notice a rapid improvement in the success of your conversations. Follow these three easy steps when in doubt:

- Position
- Smile
- Purpose

It was mentioned earlier in the previous chapters how important it was to correctly position yourself before starting a conversation. Different cultures different perspectives and ideas of personal space during a conversation. or instance, north Americans tend to start at about a half arm's length when talking with even close friends, for those that are not fully aware, this comfort zone marks out to a full arm's length. However, this may come different significantly in place like japan or the Middle East where personal conversations are closer and at a lower volume. Try to appropriately measure the comfort zone of the other party based upon their culture or gender. It's important that you try to put a smile on your face when you position yourself. You may have the question going through your mind now; ''what if it is not appropriate to smile?" this may be the issue on certain occasions, such as talking with the bereaved at a funeral, but it's important to at least try- especially when you do not really know your partner. Smiling is an important engine of rapport, which is basically the first thing that you'll try to achieve as a small talk professional.

The truth is, smiling does not only make you look happier, it also makes you sound happier. It will travel a long way in helping you make the right sort of impression. It might be difficult to master moving with technique, and even small talking with new people can be nerve wracking, but the thing is, a lot of that nervous energy can be improvised in to fidgeting and involuntary movements.

Avoiding these involuntary movements does not really mean staying in one position. This stiff, stubborn body language can be unfriendly and intimidating afterward. Design a sentence by stepping on your tip toes for a second. Controlling your movements with your speech can assist you in coordinating the rhythm of your conversation and play along with your nerves. These proposed movements will go a long way to curb and prevent involuntary movements that may arise through your nerves. Even if you're going to forget a lot from this important lesson, always keep in mind that conversations will require you to spend more time reading the body language of the other person (your partner). Just exactly the way they are able to calculate over 50% of your meaning in your body language, you as well have the chance to read theirs. Change uncomfortable or disturbing subjects following verbal cures or pick topics that pique their interest. Your instincts won't deceive you, follow your heart when it tells you to move on.

DAY 16

WORKING WITH POSITIVE AGREEMENT.

It sounds simple and fun; it is better to agree than to disagree. It has been discovered over the years that a lot of people do not believe in the positive agreement they make. Today we will concentrate majorly on how to work with positive agreement to yield more positive results in your conversations. Quality time have been spent on discussions about what small talk is, so this is the perfect time to discuss what small talk is not;

- Persuasion: an attempt to make use of effective speech to drag someone to make an agreement with you.
- Debate: also another strategy, but does not work out since it's just an attempt to use rational thinking or applying logic to convince your partner.
- Coercion: small talks are far from trying to overpower someone emotionally or with intimidation.

It's not up to you to force agreement on small talk subjects. Rather, you want to find a way to get in contact or familiar with agreeable subjects or later. When the stakes are getting higher, the agreement will be much easier because you would have built for yourself a rapport. This is where the biggest underlying secret of small talk comes in. small talk is simply just a way to enhance subconscious agreement. Simply put, a huge part of our mind is subconscious and it clouds or affects or decision making more than we realize. We are likely to be influenced far more by the opinion of someone that we have agreed with on a previous occasion than we are to with a person we have never agreed with before. Your work as a professional small talker is to get started by looking for these little agreements. There are three main techniques to take in to consideration when seeking subconscious positive agreement;

- Mirroring your counterpart: this can be carried out physically or verbally. If your partners are sitting, then you sit in a similar manner sideways with them. Try to adjust the tone of your voice to sound the same as theirs. If you notice any particular expression or emotion, try to mirror the exact thing. This happens to be the most effective subliminal ways to get ahead with agreement.
- Establishing common interest: do not make the mistake of feigning interest, as it won't be effective as it should be. Instead, try to relate with the subjects and topics until you get the one that interests you both.
- Start compliments: this is a very essential one, the main point of small conversation is not to flatter. You have to give compliments lightly and only when the needs arise. If the other person involved says something agreeable or profound, you shouldn't be scared to give them positive affirmation for it. However, this must be carried out for every word that comes out of their mouth. The best way to go about this is to be sincere.

DAY 17

AVOID SLIDING INTO TOPICS.

A lot of things would be covered in the upcoming chapters, basically to avoid small talks without motive and agenda, because we've discovered that the risk involved will at the end branch off in to territory that you are not willing to cover. So it's better for you to just weed out other unsavoury topics on your own.

The first and most important thing that needs to be avoided during a small talk session is politics. As explained in the last chapter, we are looking for agreement, bringing politics in is more like getting a boiling pot of diversity and disagreement.

The second aspect that needs to be watched is your religion. This particular subject will make you go in to a deep feeling or no opinion at all, and that is basically between them and their religious community.

The last area you're to avoid is topics of sex and sex related matters. You're not ready to make assumptions about the sexual orientation of your conversation partner. A person's sex life and issues can both be very important and personal, and this is completely inappropriate for small talk conversation.

DAY 18

GOSSIP; AN ENEMY YOU SHOULD ABSTAIN FROM.

Little gossip can be a lot more than you think. To some, gossip and small talk are synonymous, and I'm here to declare to you today that nothing is further from the truth. Gossip does not have a place in professional small talk or any kind of conversation. Today, we are going to learn how to deal with this insidious intruder that always get in to every conversation. The major difference between gossip and small talk is that one is characterized by pleasantries while the other can be explained as a practice in judgemental nastiness. Gossip most times is soaked in rumour and a point of view targeted at others for the purpose of degrading them or to feel better about yourself.

Believe me, I have worked with many professional gossipers, and I know you have had the opportunity to work closely with someone like this at some point. One of the few I worked for was so concerned with what was going on with other people's personal lives, she didn't look like she was concerned about her own work at all. I feel guilty for citing her as an example, but bear in mind that this is purely for instructional purpose.

Let's concentrate on the practical aspect; what is the first impression you perceive about someone who gossips with you or about you? If you do not have a personal relationship with them, and yet they are still comfortable talking about others with you, how would you feel about this? It's obvious that someone who goes around doing this about people would definitely be doing the same about you. From another point, you discover that the person they are talking to is laughing about what is being said about you, you know that moment you'd consider such gossip not to be entertaining as they claim.

Do not try to think you can connect positively with people by gossiping about other people with them; it does not work that way, you cannot talk about them and still relate successfully with them. You may think you were only trying to talk about somebody else, but trust me, your partner would see it like you're showing your real character and you're only trying to disclose to them the kind of person that you really are; ultimately not trustworthy and cannot keep secrets.

Often times, it's hard to distinguish between professional conversations and outright gossip. This can be true in the case of rumours that may ruin an entire business, for instance corporate takeovers and political matters. Be sincere when you answer this question in your mind; are we talking about something that is too personal in nature? Is it something I would be proud to say in front of everyone in the office? If you're unable to clear your head concerning these questions, then it may be a gossip.

Try not to get out of that image of honesty and trustworthiness, and you can only achieve this when you stick to neutral subjects only, not keeping it conspirational. See gossip as the key that'll blow this image off, so it's better not to bring it up at all.

Don't be confused, gossips always have its place among couples, family members and close friends, but don't forget you're in the professional world, you have to stick to the weather. Stay close.

DAY 19

MISTAKES OF THE MOUTH.

Today's lesson will focus on what happens when your mouth moves away from you, and the steps you can take to control it. Have ever been in a situation where you realize the conversation is not yielding anything positive but you just can't stop talking? You are probably going through one of the common mistakes of the mouth. These may come in different ways that you cannot control, like a speech impediment or a Freudian slip.

The following, however, are generally within your control and can be avoided in the extreme.

- Complaining

Probably you might have talked to someone who does nothing other than complaining. Well, if you didn't like it, then what's the reason behind other people liking it, moaning about life looks like a time honoured tradition, most especially in the workplace. The truth is, aimless whining won't solve anything and it won't give the other party in the conversation any information they are not aware of already. Therapists around us make so much money because there are few things that are more tedious than watching someone complain. It's better to keep this kind of analysis for your analyst alone and limit your complaints to the poor weather and box scores. Don't forget to make it brief even in this case.

- Verbiage

Ask yourself this; can we really call it small talk if you're using big words? One of the common mistakes conversationalists make is that they forget to jettison such confusing verbiage as acronyms. You already know what the acronym TTYL means, but saying it and having to explain the meaning can cut the flow of a conversation. The same goes with esoteric and old fashioned words that we do not make use of again. Making use of confusing words or verbiage from the dark corners of your vocabulary will not impress the other party and may just alienate them.

- Repetitive phrases.

I'm not shy to say this; but I consider this particular one as my own personal weakness. It's possible that glibness gets a laugh in small doses. One of my friends would constantly say ‘’you're the man”. He always said it anytime and anywhere even if it wasn't appropriate. You can only be called a man many times before it grates on you. You just have to try to minimize them and check for alternatives that could be impressive. This is important because you don't want a partner who is annoyed with you in a conversation.

- Lack of charity.

You can choose to mumble or talk in a low voice, although this is more common with people that you're not familiar with, you get to flow with people that you know very well. You have to make effort speak distinctly and perfectly so that everyone can understand you better. Sarcasm determines clarity.

As discussed in the previous chapters about tone, ironic or sarcastic comments can have their meaning confused. The worst thing you can do is utter something horrible for the sake of being humorous and then your other party believed you to be serious. Any of these of mistakes can make a small talk difficult, but of all of them all together can cause disaster. Minimizing and eliminating these habits totally can be huge step in to not only having a successful conversation but also speaking with confidence in any situation you find yourself.

DAY 20

A TIME AND PLACE FOR EVERYTHING.

Have you ever been going about your daily activity only to have someone spring up a conversation at a time and location that is so baffling that you find yourself wondering why they reasoned it was appropriate to speak to you? At one time or the other, you might have been accosted on the street by some people you don't know on the street, but have had the same thing happen at your company? There are specific places and times when you need to be left alone.

We are going to concentrate on what seems to be a point of etiquette but in reality is very strategic. When exactly are you to make use of small talk, and when are you to forgo it? Although small talk can be a very powerful tool, it can't be used in every situation. In fact, there are some places where you have to avoid small talk altogether. I've been in a lot of conversations that I found regrettable and many times I discovered the reason for the failure has not been due to the choice of the topic or thesis, but rather the poor timing and choice of location for the conversation.

Many years ago, a conversation went bad because of the location we were in, we had to raise our voices so we could hear each other. This resulted in our tones going to a sharp edge and flared our tempers needlessly. We both realized at the end of the day that the shouting match was caused by the noise and the mutual reaction we showed to be yelled at. Your venue is the first thing to put in to consideration; where you are at that time, and what you are doing will greatly influence and determine how good your conversation will be. Earlier I cited an illustration about striking a conversation with the bereaved at a funeral as an inappropriate time to start a small talk. You have to be careful about places like;

- Semi- private places like public restroom: Not everyone finds it suiting to talk while using the facilities, this should be noted in the case where you are meeting the person for the first time.
- Elevators: the normal human behaviour is to be quiet when in elevators. So talking with someone you don't know in the elevator looks unprofessional and even sounds rude.
- Parking garage: anyone you meet in the parking garage is either going somewhere urgent or planning to head in to do attend to some things. It's a bad idea for start-up a small talk here.

Considering a place to start a conversation require that you ask yourself these three questions;

- Is this area conducive enough to allow free flow during the conversation?
- How secured is the place, can your partner express his/her mind freely without fear or worries?
- Is the area in a location where you or your partner will consider strange or unusual?

Time is also another important factor that needs to be considered, you shouldn't be in a conversation and your partner would have to beg off because they have urgent things to attend to. Although small

talks might still thrive in this situation, but it's better to save it for a time and location that is most appropriate and conducive to yield a positive result. But for now, be careful so as not to be the one that'll pry your foot out of your mouth rather than getting a metaphorical root at the door.

DAY 21

ONE (WO) MAN SHOW.

There is one final, and most essential, element to avoid in your quest to become a professional conversationalist. A lot of people tend to fall in to this particular trap. Before we go deep in to it, we are going to dive directly in to our job for the day. This is going to show you a lot about your conversation style. For this work today, you won't be needing a partner but rather you'll need a digital recorder or a talk-to-type program. Once you're ready, try to dictate every important thing that has happened to you this week, or at least record everything that comes to your mind. You can take as much time as you need, but try to target about 6-7 minutes or less. Do not read further until you've accomplished this.

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Are you done? If yes, then you can read on. Now that your dictation is ready, check out for the number of times you used the words ''I" or ''me". You'll be surprised at how large the numbers are. This is exactly the pitfall of conversation or small talk. Although it would sound insane if you say you wouldn't talk about yourself during the course of a professional talk, but you have to be conscious so it does not become the ''me show".

Talking about ourselves is purely natural, even though a lot of people don't enjoy talking about themselves, but somehow they find their selves in the loop. This is one important thing to have in mind when you're getting started as a small talk professional. Knowing your weaknesses are just as essential as knowing your strengths. Having the feeling that the conversation at the end would gravitate to yourself give you the chance to move it where it needs to go. We probably might have had a conversation with someone who talked about nothing but himself or herself, making yourself the priority in any small talk conversation is likely to yield the same result. Do you remember the impression you got from such person? More than likely you this weird impression that your other party was conceited at best and arrogant at worst. This is certainly not the type of impression you want to make.

A successful small talk conversation is expected to be an interactive experience, nevertheless, it may be tempting to place yourself and your interest on the top list, but you have to caution yourself to resist this temptation. It is obviously the sign of a healthy ego. You have to try to entertain your partner with little about yourself to arouse their curiosity, but not enough to completely make it die down. It is important that you give your conversion partner the chance to stake their claim in the conversation so that they can feel a sense of ownership in it.

Interactive conversations are lightened up by mutual curiosity, and it's important that you're curious about the ideas, opinions, feelings and thoughts of your partner as you would wish for them to be about yours. Think of it as the primary and most important rule of conversation. One of the most difficult phase of forgoing the one-person show to make it a collaborative small talk is the realization that topics you find interesting will not necessarily be the topic of universal adoration. Plan each

small talk session to look like a quest, search for subjects that your partner can relate to, so that you bring about an experience that will be stimulating to both parties (you and your partner.)

DAY 22

JOB INTERVIEWS

I would say congratulations for holding up till now, just eight days more, and you'll be the best conversationalist you've always wished for. You already know the basics, the secrets and the respective situations to wave. It's high time our lesson took a practical turn. In the course of the remaining eight days, we'll take you through how to perform in situations where conversations can be of great impact on your personal success. We'll focus today's lesson on mainly job interviews. This particular task happens to be one of the most unpleasant experiences in the human condition. The judges and board as a whole is fundamentally set up to make you uncomfortable and pen down the way you react to this discomfort.

However, you will discover that just the techniques to being a professional cannot help you get more job interviews that'll yield better results, but make the entire process more alluring and pleasant. A lot of people fail when they go in for job interviews because they focus only on their performance, or are majorly concerned about how the interviewers' day are going or the reactions on their faces. You may be the twenty-fifth person they have interviewed that day, and their respective faces are trying to blend in to one continuous blur.

One thing that should be on your mind when you step in to that room is how you'll make the interviewer's day easier; this is one important mission you are to give yourself. One of the powerful benefits of effective conversation therapy is that it will help both parties in a small talk relax. Now, you'll not only allay your tension, but also reduce it in your interviewer.

We'll start on this note of caution; job interviews are strictly structured events placed on a strict and professional time table, so try not to use small talk to avoid direct question or waste the interviewer's limited time with you. Just be yourself and be forthright when asked a question, and be sure to stand with appropriate comments when given the chance for a small talk. You'll even have the chance for a brief talk before setting foot in to the interviewer's office, you can just practice with the waiting room receptionist. The receptionist will not only help you prepare for the interview, but also create an impression in you. Although they may not be given the authority to hire a manager, but the opinion of a human resources assistant can often represent power in an office. They may be in charge of handling referring candidates to hiring man- agers at the end of interviews, or the interviewer may ask for their help if two equally qualified personnel present themselves. If they are not of the same sex, it's best to make your small talk not too flirtatious. This may trigger the wrong message right off the bat.

Once you step in to the interview room, stay close to know when you have to follow the interviewer's script and when you'll open up the conversation. This will be your best shot at giving the interviewer a tip to remember, it is very important that you do not come in between their questions to go off topic, but go in line with their cues. For formality sake, they usually ask how your day has been like, but you can give them the shock by giving a well detailed answer and reasons why day has been fine. They always usually ask if you have questions at the end of the interview, this will come with the expectation that you might ask about work hours or salary. This is the perfect time to make the shift

and ask them more about themselves, check around for personal things in their office that might need to be asked about; maybe a diploma that reflects their alma mater. Just think of any conversation that you can engage it and will break the ‘mold’ to set you apart from a forest of identical resumes.

Check out these six tips:

- If your interviewer begins with a small talk, don’t miss the opportunity; follow the lead.
- Follow the appropriate topics as outlined before.
- Stay on the interviewer and make them talk about their own experiences.
- Don’t bore your interviewer(s) with stories, keep them as short as possible.
- Step on your enthusiasm, don’t forget your aim is to calm yourself and the interviewer.
- Always be sincere.

Run this through with your partner and see how it plays out, till then, stay calm with confidence!

DAY 23

COFFEE MACHINE AND WATER COOLER

Can you still get a clear picture of when you were still in elementary school and you were looking forward to recess? Or during the high school days when you'd meet up with your friends between periods? The working world revolves a lot, but it still can't alter the human nature. The playground and the lockers in the hallways now have moved to the water cooler. Hanging out with your co-workers during your break s from work time can be an incredibly excellent experience that can change both your personal and business network. However, you may not have been taking full note of your opportunities if you are not a naturally gregarious person. Today's lesson is focused on teaching you that exactly.

Typically, you come across these set of people during your work day; your bosses, your subordinates, and your fellow workers. Believe it or not, you are going to benefit not just little from engaging in professional small talk with all of them. The point is to realize that what you're trying to achieve is building a relationship on a solid ground- talking about something that seem somewhat frivolous on the surface.

Creating and maintaining positive relationships in your place of work is essential for a legion of reasons. A little conversation with your superior may not seem to add up to much; for instance, but if you try to keep a congenial relationship, he/she may not forget to add or slot in your name when the time for promotion comes. Your colleagues may not have the power to make such powerful move, but they can stand in as backup if you ever need someone to put in good words about you. Once you're able to build rapport with those under you, then you should be sure you are way up since your image is reflecting directly upon them.

Make every day count when you step in to your office, you can brighten the day of a co- worker, although some of them show interest in what they are doing, while others are just there for the pay check; either way, the two parties must have someone who is worth coming back to see, and that person should be no one else but you. When you sit down to think about it, have you been able to come up with the actual number of minutes you spend with your colleagues? This might just appear to be the greater part of your life, no one made the rule that it has to be family alone.

It doesn't have to come with a specific meaning, copy machine and water cooler conversation may seem like a cliché from a TV series, but the truth remains that it is an integral section of the workplace ecosystem. No one is able to forget you, because your memory will become a part of them. One thing you have to be careful about have been discussed in one of the previous chapters; gossip. One thing about the water cooler talk is that it marks a perfect spot for gossip to take pre-eminence. Don't forget to always weed that garden at every opportunity.

Today's lesson is a choice. It's either you continue with the conversation partner that has helped you up till now, or you begin to dig deep with one of your colleagues. You can tell them about this guide, or just keep them in the dark; either way, be sure to ask for their assistance. You can just follow the

instructions below:

1. Start with a personal anecdote, maybe a funny story for instance.
2. Move on to an observation about the weather.
3. Give a positive comment about the flavour/ odour of the coffee/ water.
4. Proceed to question them about they think about the news item.

Once you've rain checked these topics, the next thing to do is make a note of the time. If you're working perfectly fine with your daily exercises, the entire exchange should be captured in about 5 minutes. Don't forget that there is no time like the present, and focusing now to improve your fundamentals will broaden your knowledge in upcoming lessons.

DAY 24

BUSINESS LUNCH.

We are going to focus on something sceptical today; much more formal activity: the business lunch. This is more of a challenge than the one we treated yesterday about water cooler talk. Business lunches are somewhat without exception, channelled to a particular facet of your career. It may constitute losing a deal, reporting a progress on your project work, or any number of other business related activities. In fact, the main difference in a business lunch is that you get food and drinks alongside. This way, having a conversion repertoire is even more vital for the business lunch than it would be for an encounter in the break room. Nothing can be so boring and forgettable than talking about business alone at a business lunch. Also, moving straight up to business can be so uncomfortable at best and confrontational at the latter end. Your small talk skills can give you an edge to talk about business later in the lunch, after you might have put your co- workers at rest with sufficient amount of reasonable small talk.

Check out these three helpful tips when navigating small talk at a business lunch:

1. Start the lunch after a few minutes with small, entertaining to sophisticated topics such as art appreciation or books you came across recently. Unlike many other small talk conversations where the subject that is being raised is either about weather or sports.
2. Quickly snap out of the conversation immediately you order, but before the food gets to you. No one likes to talk about business while eating; especially when it's their favourite.
3. In the case where you are unable to stop the conversation when the food arrives, probably maybe your colleague picks it up, it's better to observe table manners and etiquette, just stay quiet and eat.

You won't have the opportunity to talk much at your business lunch, so it's better to make use of the opportunity that you have to the fullest. The better part of it is that your partner might have to sign a deal with you after the lunch. Why not get a hold of your conversation partner again, and let's consider the practical aspect of this section;

Give yourselves a 20 to 30-minute time limit to complete the business lunch, but the middle 15 minutes will likely be spent eating. Of the 7 minutes before and after, only about 5 minutes before and after (or 6 minutes total) should be allocated for a little conversation. Prepare a list each on possible small talk topics as well as the proposed business topics to cover. You'll notice that this looks like the most difficult exercise, and certainly would be the longest. The most delicate skill to put in to practice when it comes to business lunch is how to conclude the small talk and end the lunch. Nobody wants to be hooked down by a talk when there is no more food on the table. This might sound unprofessional and is possible to cause friction if you don't get back in line in a timely manner.

Learn what I call the ''soft landing" with your partner where you diplomatically call for the end to the lunch and wrap up the important topics you wrote down earlier. This will help you get your listening

skills right as well as give you the opportunity to memorize and restate points that you believe are important and should be kept fresh in your mind.

DAY 25

PARTIES, CONFERENCES AND NETWORKING EVENTS.

You've got to be honest with yourself; this was the actual lesson you've been dreading, only if you are a natural extrovert, there are some things that are more stressful than going to parties and other networking activities. Today is going to be a bit tough, so you are going to have to be tougher. This is where all the lessons you've learnt so far will pay off.

When you're in a party, a conference or networking event, you are likely to hold one of four possible roles. How you react to the event will depend on this role. The possibilities include:

1. Host/Greeter.
2. Guest.
3. Networker.
4. Support.

People will definitely come to you if you're in the first category, making introduction moderately easy and opportunities for small talk plentiful. You may be in charge of giving a presentation or attending to a table at a convention or any similar event. Make sure to create eye contact and smile at strangers to acknowledge them, someone will approach you in no time. Topics that may outstand may include how successful the turnout was or other positive factors that craved out of the event.

If you happen to be a guest or a visitor, the challenge is on you to approach and kick start conversations. The golden rule for breaking ice at events and starting small talks ate networking arena are remarkably the same. You have to keep one thing in mind; everyone attends a party with the intention of meeting a new person and talking with them. So, if you find out that your introduction is not so much an imposition as making it up to meet new people, you will find it much compelling and easy. Your best topics in this case are basically probing enquires about what brings your other party to the event and if you have mutual acquaintances. Your own work as a networker is a little bit different from being a host or guest. As a networker, you have to join groups, or even groups of groups in a cohesive way. You may need to go in to many conversations in the middle. The best way to go about this is to smile or enthusiastically go with something that was just said. When this is done, be careful not to shoehorn your conversation topics in to small talks, but try to carefully merge in to each of them as if you're approaching from a highway on- ramp.

Support is the final role, and the sad part about this is that you might find yourself at the end catering an event or working as a neutral staff. Even with that, you may still create opportunities for personal networking or even very revealing small talks during the course of the event. Conversation with other staff, special guests or even the host can turn out to invaluable connections that you can make use of later. With this at the back of your mind, always prepare for short conversations when you're working an event just as seriously as if you were attending the event as a special guest.

Maybe you're not that kind of person that can withstand large crowd, take a break to regain who you are and review the topical assessments you prepared in the previous lessons. Don't forget to excuse yourself so you can move around in the event centre on a regular basis, perhaps going for another role you think you're capable of.

This particular aspect does not have any other way to go about it. In fact, it might take the next 5 days before you put the whole concept together, and you may need to combine the zeal with tomorrow's lesson. Now, you should go for a party or be the host to one yourself so you can utilize all these principles you learnt today. There's no way to wave this, you have to learn it and be perfect. Bring your partner who has been your support all this while along to tackle the four roles and many more within the time frame. Until then, maintain the free flow with ease.

DAY 26

FAMILY, FRIENDS AND PARTNERSHIP.

Four days to go! And you're going to start getting rewards. Today, our lesson will be the most rewarding out of the whole series, at least after the last two difficult days, you truly deserve to be rewarded. It may be a thing of surprise to you, but most people prefer this book because of this chapter. We want to relate better with our families, friends and partners. Often times when you speak to your dearest, you feel like your tongue have been tied, and so it's preventing you from having heads on, or knowing how to begin.

Generally, happy lives and a healthy relationships have their foundations firm on communication basis, and this communication can in turn be primed by a small little talk. If we are so close with these highlighted individuals, then small talk is required. Conversations with our loved ones serve a different purpose, far from using it as a tool to get to people we don't know much about. For instance, there is no need connecting when talking with any of your family member, because it's present already, all you need small talks for is rebuilding connections. You might have come across many individuals over the years who have become estranged from their relatives, and yet they cannot pinpoint a single cause to why it's happening that way. It's just a change or evolution sort of that has happened as little kids grow up to adulthood and begin to raise families of their own. You may consider this as a natural process, I would see tooth decay as the same too. Small talk acts like your toothpaste that helps combat this process with good conversational hygiene. Here are some rebranded conversation starters for families:

1. Displaying an image of a recent trip or vacation. Cell phones and mobile devices are making this easier than ever.
2. Discussing about old, good times is a perfect stand in for an icebreaker.
3. Enumerating future plans or even whimsical dreams of what you're planning to do someday.

Talking about your real friends, you have loads of conversation subjects that you all discuss on a regular basis. You may feel as though your thesis is stuck in a nut, nothing to bother yourself about. Just apply the basic techniques that have been discussed in the previous chapters on your friends like you're just getting to know them. Discuss with them about elementary things like weather or probe for a conversation topic that has never been discussed since you started being friends with them, but you have to make sure you can control the heat when it gets out of hand. Getting to know your pals again afresh will give you the feeling like you're just seeing them for the first time, and nothing sounds or look the same to you.

The most difficult aspect of this guide is making small talk with your partner. Even though a lot of books have been combined and written about this subject, this chapter will provide you with powerful keys to which you can improve your communication with your partner:

- Be careful not to engage in ‘’decision talk” with your partner. The stress of an upcoming

big decision might happen to be the cause of the stress in the first place. Believe it or not, your partner is not always interested in these heavy subjects.

- Don't be scared of being frivolous, even to the point of silliness. A small tablet of inanity to make your other party laugh may be just the door way to more interesting and meaningful small talk. Everything does not have to start with a big point.
- Make your partner the topic: talking about what you admire about your partner is one sure way to turn them up. No matter how you describe it; either a physical attribute or a strength in their character- your partner will always want to hear what drew you to them.
- Make it a simple small talk; do not like affection or expectation to it: many couples make this mistake and misses the point at the end. The short conversation is proposed to renew and strengthen a personal bond, and not built toward an expected result.

You'll probably feel that you deserve to explore a little bit.

DAY 27

MAKE YOUR DAILY LIFE YOUR TRAINING GROUND.

You've come a bit far in this course, and by now you can broadly practise the techniques that distinguish a small talker from a small talk professional. Now the practises are over, the time has come to bring it all in to reality; in to the realm of your daily life. Try to reflect on how far you have gone and how much you have learned. I believe you have what it takes to finish up strong because no one has forced you up too this stage. I also believe that you're well equipped now to make use of ideas to make your life a training ground.

Are you bothered about where to begin? You've started well by making use of a dedicated conversation partner, you were comfortable doing small, contained practices which wouldn't have been possible if you had not been following the instruction, so for now I say kudos! There are a lot of ways where you can make your everyday life sort of look like a conversation or small talk filed over the course of your typical day. Below are tested and trusted examples on how to make your typical day a conversation workout:

- The one topic conversation warm -up:

Get a person who is so close to you, be it your friend, co- worker or casual acquaintance and start up a conversation with the sole aim of talking about one of your small talk subjects. This is a good way to kick start the day with a good snippet of small talk. It's of use in the morning when people tend to be prone to being in the rush and do not really want to get caught up in any conversation. It's an ideal warm up to start a better day.

- The two topics conversation stretch:

Choose two topics that are closely related to discuss with someone on your first break at work. Your primary aim in this will be to smoothly segue from one topic in to the next one. This could be a switch from the weather in to your plans for the weekend, or from financial markets in to tips for investing. The time frame does not really matter as it is not considered as long as it meets the small talk criteria and the transition holds the interest of your fellow colleague.

- The lunch break triathlon:

One your lunch breaks at work, break it down to talking to speaking to at least four people. This might be the most challenging part of your day, but have it in mind that you have a focus, and that is what should be your top priority. These 4-5 minute small talks are what you have preparing and warming up for. If you're able to spend 10- 15 minutes socializing in the course of your break, you can easily mark that you've been able to have a successful conversation workout on your workday.

- The meeting marathon:

If you have the opportunity, be sure to arrive for a meeting earlier than others to engage in a small talk

before the first order of business. This will lay out the tone with other associates in the meeting, you may also have the chance to warm up proceedings with sharp and brief forays into small talk. Consider this as a marathon, don't forget anyone hardly runs the entire time, try to view this from that perspective, and look at the meeting as a chance to calculate and slow down the pace of what has, up to this point, been sprints of little conversation.

- The after work time out:

After the day's work, you can just go out to socialize with a few friends and spend some time with them. Talking about your day or how both businesses are moving may be tempting, but as you calm down for the day, put aside ''shop talk" and concentrate on small talk as you unwind. At this point, work on it as much or as little as you like. You'll get a sense of your own personal endurance and tolerance for conversation this way. You may find that you are able to work on a lot as time goes on.

You'll be presented with these opportunities every day this week, the next one and for the rest of your life. Your everyday adventure about life will be the best training that you could ever ask for. Don't waste these opportunities as they come around, instead take everything serious and exercise your techniques, in no time you'll find your competence and confidence going higher. Soon, you'll find it so easy to reconnect with friends and family and start fresh conversations with strangers as well. We'll make use of the few days we have left to cover how perfect to know how much progress you have made and discover how much room you have to improve. Until then, make professional small talk a daily effort.

DAY 28

TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

At this point, you have made considerable amount of progress, and this is where you have to start checking in for how far you've come. This task will be easier for some than others, because some people prefer the self- examination than others. Truthfully speaking, assessing your own performance and progress is so easy to put down on paper than carrying the real thing out, but instructions are important at this point, so you have to be conscious about what everything around you is saying. You'll be the sole arbiter of your success when you're done with book and you're ready to face the world.

With a book like this, the essence of self- evaluating and assessing your own rate of progress cannot be stressed enough, just about two days to go and you'll be considered as a small talk professional free of instruction. It is not just only important to check how far you've come, but also to make the decision on how far you still want to go for you to become a sound conversationalist that you wanted to become when you signed up for this book.

There are three main components that can help you track, assess and evaluate your progress a small talk professional honestly.

- Set and follow up on your goals (track them at every strategic point).
- Draw the plan of your progress on a continuum of success, and finally
- Analyse your setbacks and successes.

The only part you'll be able to handle yourself is setting goals, after which you'll base these objectives on your own capabilities. No one should set these goals for you; they are rather too personal for someone to tamper with. They don't have to be much; you might simply start by resolving to engage in one small talk conversation every day. You may feel as though you need to set more ambitious goals, maybe for instance getting one business referral every day or closing up more deals to meet a quota. Whatever goals you're in for, be certain they are to some point realistic, achievable and can be accomplished within an estimated time frame. Setting appropriate goals will enable you to avoid unnecessary frustration and appraise your progress accurately on your own.

Some people still face a lot of difficulties even after setting the goals, some people find it difficult to evaluate progress toward a goal, probably because they are scared to admit failure or because they have considerable doubts about their own efforts. Neither of these will help you. While you face the temptation of viewing a particular conversation as a complete success or total failure, give yourself the edge that neither of those things are real. Neither success nor failure is a permanent condition. Instead, evaluate your speed and progress upon how you wished a conversation to be perceived to how it was actually received. You may discover at first that you are only splitting the equality between these two points on the continuum of conversational success, but with time, you'll find it easier to close up this gap.

Most people consider analysis to be the hardest part of the whole exercise. Once you've been able to get the calculations right, and you've been able to determine to what extent the degree of success that you've had in a conversation, you need to break it down in to what worked out as planned and what did not. You may find it difficult to select unsuccessful components out of a generally successful conversation during the course of this analysis. You have to strive to ensure that you're able to make this after-action review of your conversation as objective as possible, so that you can look for areas of improvement in your success and learn from your mistakes. Try as much as possible to keep pride, shame and emotions out of the equation. Learning to keep a watch on your own progress toward becoming a small talk professional will not be so easy, but it will certainly be worth the effort. No matter how frustrated or hopeless you may feel, you can still try to step back and evaluate it fairly enough, so that you can achieve your conversational goals than any other lesson you have learnt thus far. Write a continuum from one to fifteen and evaluate every small talk conversation you engage I yourself. At the end of the week, once you are able to create a distance from the conversations, analyse the components of the conversations that made you give it that number. If you are able to do this consistently, you'll discover the bad habits that has been holding you back from onset in no time.

DAY 29

ENJOY YOURSELF- MAKE EVERY MOMENT COUNT.

Just one day to go! You are almost at the end of the tunnel. So for today, take your time to just hang out and enjoy yourself for the day. There are no tough assignments, no goals to meet today. Just relax and reminisce all that you have learned so far.

This may look more like a frivolous lesson, but it would not be placed so deep in the lesson if it was not one of the more important lessons that you will take away from this book. With all the technique and practice you have learnt in to the last week of your life, you should never forget that there's a time to forget the worries and just enjoy yourself. Human discourse is much more efficient when you're talking about a mutually pleasurable activity, and the truth about it is that it would show even if you're not having any fun. The other party (your conversation partner) will check up on your disinterest, distress and whatever is hindering your enjoyment that won't make you enjoy your conversation.

You may be wondering why and how you should enjoy yourself when you have a heavy load to lift off you. Just know that enjoyment is an indispensable part of the entire process. We were careful with every word throughout the course of the lesson. However, you should have found the words coming out much easier than it used to be in the past. I have seen a lot of lives change with this, so as you become more drifted to small talk and its possibilities, you are bound to enjoy it more than you did when you first started.

One major reason why you should enjoy yourself is because you might find yourself becoming bored of the same thing at some point, you might be stuck in a rut, dealing with old topics or even making use of exact conversations every time as if you're always reading from a script, you have to try and measure each conversation you have as what it really is, it's impossible for you to replicate an experience you'll never have again. When you view it from that point, then you'll discover that you don't have a choice than to enjoy.

I kind of hit a wall a few years ago. I enjoyed having conversations with others because I believe it was essential to my business, so I started looking at everyone as nothing but work. You wouldn't believe it, but my work started suffering at this exact time. I wouldn't have made the breakthrough if my employer hadn't advised me at that time to enjoy it and make it fun, he was the only one who really understood my malaise. I never considered it to be something within my powers until when I started every conversation with an anecdote of something that I personally enjoyed or believed was fun. The point where I stopped treating my business work as pure work was the point where I started realizing personal success.

As it is now, you're in a unique position where you do not have to go through that before realizing, you don't have to hit that wall before you get to know right from wrong. If you make every conversation start with fun, you'll be able to combat the boredom and rote repetition that will turn out to despair. Here are a few things to keep in mind when you're not enjoying your small talk

endeavours:

- Always remember that it's all about you, you'll in full control of the activities going on in your life, and you choose to be in the conversation because you want to.
- Having fun does not mean you won't have your business done, everything gets better.
- Calm yourself, you tend to assuage your anxiety when you relax, don't let nerves weigh you down, always take a deep breath.
- Don't be too hard on yourself. Always remember that you can excuse yourself when you are not feeling too comfortable, you can always fit in later.

Having fun is one way to get everything done in time, when you're happy, you can change the world. It all begins with that you believe in. Believe in fun, you won't regret it

DAY 30

ROUND UP

A lot more can be said, but finally, this is your last lesson in this epic 30 -day quest to become a successful conversationalist. For the past 29 days, you've been tutored about different techniques to make things happen, and today you'll kick start a conversation with more confidence and organization, because you are now a professional in the communication world.

There are takeaways that you should not forget as you go forth as a small talk professional. You have learnt and practiced many truths about the nature and composition of small talk, but there are certain ones that should be placed next to your heart:

- Small talk may be seen as a waste of time, but it is actually time well spent; take note of this important point, people might want to convince and confuse you.
- Small talk with personal meaning orientation will scratch business shop talk off any time.
- Small talk should now be seen as an effective tool that is available right next to you and can be a gateway to success.

You still have the chance to go back to the previous chapters you struggled with, this way, you'll review and assimilate the important points, no one is an island of knowledge, and so I don't expect you to have everything registered in your brain already, constant practices will bring out the best in you. Identifying your weakness is just as important as acknowledging your strength. I want to assure you that you'll definitely excel since you've been able to lay hands on this book, and this how you can help others who are still in the position that you were when you started in day one. You've been instructed about many secrets of success, as well as the things to exploit and avoid. It's up to you to make this permanent, and this can only be achieved if you keep following these instructions. You have to make the decision now; whether you would make use of this manual or not, but I would advise that you want it again and again as this is the only way to dedicate your spirit, soul and body to constant improvement. You definitely would have noticed some changes in you, you're not the same person any more. One important thing is that you shouldn't give up; try to redouble your efforts and realize that you know everything you're supposed to know.

This shouldn't end here, endeavour to spread the word to make sure that you impact at least three people per day, this means that you would have impacted about 90 people at the end of the next 30 days and close to about 120 people in just two months. Now, you see how you can make the world a better place? It's up to you to decide what you want and how you want it to be. Don't waste this golden opportunity of becoming a professional in communication, you'll go a long way and definitely be surprised at the rate at which you've gone in such a small time. Take time to attend to things that need attention, don't be too hard on yourself, and don't go too soft on yourself, you're one vessel that can't be manipulated, so you have to be careful and sure about your status on communication skills.

On the final note, I would like to congratulate you for reading this to the end, you've taken this course

because you believe in the powers of small talks, so this shouldn't be the last time I'm hearing from you. I would look forward to seeing your questions about any confusing aspect in the future. Till then, remain the professional that you are!